keting and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act", 1980;

(b) if so, the details of their demands; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) Some Trade & Industry Assocciation have demanded repeal of the Essential Commodities Act, 1995 on account of changed scenario of the production/supply of essential commodities. However, theer is no demand for repealing of Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980.

(c) It has been decided not to repeal the Act in the interest of the effective regulatory administration in the sphere of distribution of essential commodities in the community at this stage.

Availability of edible oils

112. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that despite import of edible oils, the availability of edible oils in the Public Distribution System (PDS) has not improved and there has been no relief in prices;

(b) whether Government would experiment with imposing levy procurement of edible oil from importers solely for distribution through PDS at affordable prices; and

(c) since oil seeds crops in Gujarat and elsewhere are threatened with late arrival of monsoons, what contingency measures are contemplated by the authorities to ensure continued supply of edible oils through PDB at stable prices?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) At present, only RBD Palmolein is being supplied to the consumers through PDS. The State Trading Corporation (STC) is the sole canalysing agency nominated by Government for import of edible oils for the Public Distribution System (PDS). STC has been authorised to import 1.5 lakh tonnes of RBD Palmolein during the current financial year 1995-96 for PDS.

(c) The present availability position of imported RBD Palmolein in the country is comfortable. Allocation of imported edible oil is being made in favour of States/UTs on the basis of demand received. All efforts are being made to meet the requirements of the States especially during the ensuing festival season. The prices of imported edible oil supplied through PDS have been kept lower than open market rates.

Rise in India's imports

113. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's imports have risen by 45.1% during the current year as compared to last year;

(b) if so, the reasons tehrefor; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to reduce the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The import growth during April-May 1995, the latest period for which trade data are available, is estimated at 13.11% in dollar terms.

(b) POL imports during April-May, 1995 indicate an increase of about 16.7%. Non-POL imports estimated at US$ 4053.96 million registered an increase of 35.4%. The increase in non-POL imports is due to the economic recovery underway in the economy and the increase in export linked imports.

(c) One of the objectives of the current reform process is to import greater trans-

parancy in the Export-Import Policies and eliminate or minimise quantitative restrictions, licencing and other discretionary controls. The Policy aims at encouraging exports and facilitating imports-linked to exports besides ensuring availability of mases consumpation items. Import liberalisation mainly focusses on promoting efficiency, productivity and quality Import of Indian industry/ products besides improving competitiveness. liberalisation is being effected in a phased manner and cautiously giving sufficient time for the indigenous industry to adjust and with care taken to ensure that small scale sector is not affected.

New markets for Tobacco in North Africa

114. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tobacco Board sent a team to North Africa to find new markets;

(b) if so, the results of this visit; and

(c) the quantity of tobacco exported so far during 1995-96 to North Africa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir. A trade delegation visited Iran, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt in June'95.

(b) The salient results of the visit are as under:

(i) The Algerian side agreed to call for tenders for about 1500 tons of Indian tobacco in August/September, 1995.

(ii) The Tunisian side agreed to consider sending a technical delegation to India to assess suitability of Indian tobacco for their cigarette blends.

(iii) The Egyptian Government Tobacco Company agreed to consider imports of Indian tobacco.

(c) During 1995-96 so far only 50 tons of tobacco has been exported to Egypt.

Poverty alleviation schemes in Karnataka

115. SHRI GUNDAPPA KORWAR: Will the Minister of PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Karnataka has submitted any poverty alleviation schemes to the Central Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof including the assistance sought in this regard; and

(c) the action proposed to be taken by the Central Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI GIRIDHAR GAMANG): (a) to (c) No poverty alleviation scheme has been submitted by the State Government of Karnataka to the Central Government. However, three major on-going Centrally Sponsored Scheme being implemented for poverty alleviation in the rural areas of Karnataka, are : (1) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) (2) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY): and (3) Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). The allocations for these schemes during the current financial year 1995-96 are as follows:

Scheme		(Rs. in lakhs)
IRDP		2797.00
JRY	1st stream	16875.55
	2nd stream	1882.00
EAS		8080.00 (Release)

No specific allocation is made under the scheme of EAS as this is demand-driven).

Strengthening Trade Ties with Republics of CIS

116. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to re-establish and strengthen